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T W O

LETTERS

FROM A

DEIST to his FRIEND,

CONCERNING

The Truth and Propagation of Deism,

IN OPPOSITION to

CHRISTIANITY.

With REMARKS.

JOHN iii. 19.

This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknefs rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.

L O N D O N:

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M DCC XXX.

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THE FIRST

FROM A

DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR

CONSTRUCTION

The Department of the Interior



OF THE INTERIOR

CHRISTIANITY

WITH REMARKS

JOHN W. FOSTER

JOHN W. FOSTER, Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

THERE are many men who exclaim furiously against pious frauds, who can dispense with any frauds whatsoever, provided only they be impious; their desir'd end, overturning religion, can sanctify lies to those lovers of truth. The disguises of modern *Deism* would fill a volume. One gentleman personates a downright Pagan, he looks upon the rabble of Gentile Gods only as so many Mediators, and questions not but the supreme Being is pleas'd with adoration under the name of *Jupiter*. Another is mightily concern'd for the law of

Moses, and contends it ought never to be fulfill'd ; you would think by his writings he were a Rabbi of the Circumcision, so ardent is his zeal for the God of *Israel*. Others with more impudence but less learning pretend even to Christianity ; they good men defend the rights of the Church and of the laity, being too much masters of their craft to be frighted at the name of Independents. Heresies are espous'd, and heretics carest in proportion to their capacities for doing mischief. Who has not heard of their encomiums on the *Socinians*? The *Arians* now enjoy their favour and panegyric ; nay *Dissenters* may gain applause on condition they be non-subscribers. This insincerity it seems is not only their practice but their principle too ; *a rule that ought always to be observ'd*. The following Letters indeed pull off the mask, and present a very unusual spectacle, a *Deist* speaking his real sentiments, which are as
contrary

contrary to his pretensions, as light to darkness. They were written by one who was then a member of the University of *Oxford*, but since expell'd ; and found in the escrutore of his unhappy friend, who sent himself out of this world by his own hands, to learn the truth of a future state. We see here how *Deism* is entirely calculated for the interest of wickedness, taking hell from before mens eyes ; but is highly prejudicial to the virtuous, leaving them no certainty of a heaven, for that we must go to revelation. We learn here the perpetual dissimulation and hypocrisy of those who are always crying up sincerity, and the ways whereby they hope to overthrow Christianity. There is no place for bitter accusation on account of uncharitableness, for tragical exclamations and invectives against presumption in searching of hearts, out of his own mouth will the wicked servant be condemn'd.

condemn'd. *Deism* here appears in its natural deformity. I desire things may be weigh'd, not persons, wherefore I have conceal'd my own name, and spar'd the names of the enemies of Christ and their own souls. A few *Remarks* are added for the sake of the more undiscerning reader; God grant they may be instrumental towards keeping men from that place of torment, which is ordain'd for hypocrites and unbelievers.

LETTER I.

Dear S I R,

March 24.

BOTH yours of this month I have receiv'd. *Bayle's* Dictionary is in the *Bodleian* library, where I now and then carry some body or other with me to read in't, and find I shall make more heretics by this means than I design'd. I know not whether you remember *W——*, an accidental discourse of his concerning the irreconcilableness of two things so very evident as Prescience and Free-will, has led me unawares to discover myself to him, both as to that subject, and the truth of Christianity; he heard me very attentively, but what the issue will be, I can only guess as yet from the good temper of the man. Let me dispute as long as I please about the *cui bono*, I find which way nature drives, yet, even *reclamante naturâ*, my reason will keep its hold. I have read the remark referr'd to in *Bayle*, I have consider'd your letter, yet cannot find that Christianity has done so much mischief in the world

world as you apprehend it to have done. Priests indeed of all religions are the same, and when they get the upper-hand, the Lord have mercy upon that nation; but priestly power, which certainly is no doctrine of Christianity, being destroy'd, I think, the evils of Christianity are not so great as to require an open denial of it, especially considering the ill consequences that may attend such a denial. Perhaps I may not without reason add, that more detriment than advantage has been done to the cause of *Deism*, by an open profession of it; yet I must own it proper that *Deism* should be propagated among friends, where there are no particular reasons to the contrary. Many *Bangorians* I know believe future punishments, but when I speak of converting men to *Bangorianism*, I mean that they should be led into the principle of interpreting Scripture by reason in all cases whatsoever, and consequently that they should follow the sentiments of *Tillotson* as to future punishments; 'tis not Scripture does the mischief, but that abominable principle of submitting reason to revelation, together with the self-interested designs of tyrannical Priests; if this evil can be cur'd, the superstition of Christianity is tolerable, and the overthrow of it I can't but think impracticable; and if it should not be so, yet if we judge of what's to come

establish'd,

by what's past, one superstition will probably succeed another, and it may well be doubted whether we of this nation shall be better'd by the change. A *Bangorian* establish'd, is as good as any, and some or other I am apt to think there will always be. As to those texts which may seem to lean towards Popery, besides that they are oppos'd by at least an equal number of *Bangorian* ones, a good comment may make them very orthodox: That you refer to in *Luke* xiv. is easily got over, as you may see by Dr. *Whitby in locum*, who refers you for the sense of the *Greek* word to *ver.* 18. of the same chapter, and *ver.* 29. of the twenty fourth chapter, and observes moreover, that the compulsion must be such as may be consistent with the parable of its being to a banquet. That men will apply these things according to their passions and inclinations is true, but then those passions and inclinations seem to make them as incapable of *Deism*, as of a reasonable spirit of interpretation. What experience you may have had I know not, but in theory I guess 'tis a difficult matter to bring a man into *Deism* without leading him into *Bangorianism*. The cause continuing the same, the effect must necessarily continue too; hence I conclude that Christianity is not the cause, but the manner of interpreting; and that to prevent this, is to strike at

the root of the disease. Whether this root can be struck at, without striking at the root of Christianity itself, is what we are next to consider. There is no likelihood you say that *Bangorianism* should ever spread, it being so inconsistent with Scripture; I don't think *Bangorianism* more inconsistent with Scripture than any other Religion whatsoever; and it has this to say in answer to objections, more than any others have, that you must so interpret as not to put any construction upon it which appears absurd to our reason. As to a future estate, I am afraid that when I discover myself to be a *Deist*, I shall hardly be able to keep my further sentiments to myself. As for *F——*'s apprehensions in a future state, a man that believes the doctrine of sincerity, will soon find the due latitude of it in real duties, nor will he think himself oblig'd to a strict observance of ceremonies. Indeed the men of weak understandings may suffer much by Christianity; but these are men I know not how to help, they think it perfect blasphemy, but so much as to question the truth of what they have once receiv'd. Perhaps there's a particular Providence in this. But to return to *F——*, he is, according to my idea of Christianity, a good Christian. But it seems by what you say of him, that you include something more in your idea of Christian,

than I do in mine. I am come now to your second letter, which I should have been more pleas'd to have heard from your own mouth. My brother I take to be a sceptical Christian, and therefore while he hopes Christianity may be true, does not care to give so much countenance to *Deism*, as to say he doubts of the truth of Christianity. As to God's benevolence, this world consider'd by itself certainly does not shew it; and indeed if this world be made without any regard to another state, I cannot help thinking of the moral world, as *Alphonsus* was said to have done of the natural, that 'tis a very bungling piece of workmanship. Hence I conclude, that as surely as God is a wise Being, so sure is it that this world has respect to something else. Whether this respect be a respect to the inhabitants of this world I know not; but I think there is good room to hope it is. But what do I talk of wisdom for? Wisdom and reason are only conversant about the means, and may be defin'd to be the knowledge of the most proper means to compass our end. But the end itself is what we are in quest of. We must then enquire what affections, what principles of action are in the Deity. Is he benevolent or not? You argue from fact that he is not, I from reason that he is. An argument from fact, if the fact be rightly stated, is unanswerable;

but your fact is not certain, because you don't certainly know the design of God in his creation, nor whether there be a world to come. If there be, all objections are answer'd, the miseries of this world are in this view trifles, and there may be a thousand reasons sufficient to justify the most benevolent Being in permitting them. Perhaps as we now enjoy double pleasure when we are freed from pain, so the present inconveniencies of life may be necessary to increase our joy hereafter. I can say nothing certain but this, that if by reason I can prove the Deity benevolent, arguments from matter of fact are of no manner of force on the other side, because they are drawn from an uncertain and partial view of things. From reason then, thus much we are certain of, that we have in ourselves a principle of benevolence, and that we approve this principle whenever we meet with it in other beings. Nor is this all, there is I know not what amiableness in benevolence, an affection which while it seeks not its own good, finds its own in that of others, and *look whatsoever he doth it shall prosper*. Benevolence, in its consequences, is surely the most self-interested affection imaginable. It unites all other affections, and makes all the world of one mind and one soul. For ever could my tongue dwell on the charms of this Syren, yet for ever should it dwell

dwell here, for ever should I celebrate this wondrous gift
 bestow'd on man, yet still there would remain a loveli-
 ness *qualem nequeo monstrare & sentio tantum*——
 That *Bayle's* book asserts the prepollence of misery in
 this life I know, what the author himself believ'd I
 cannot so easily tell. I can hardly think he believ'd
 his Manichean system. But if misery be in this life
 prepollent, this may serve to strengthen our hopes of
 another life. I know not how to leave this subject,
 without saying more on the beautiful *Je ne sçay quoy*
 of benevolence. Methinks, if there be this difference
 between God and man, I am a more glorious being
 than my Maker, which is monstrously strange.

At the assizes here was preach'd a sermon by S——
 of M——en, which offended the ears of some weak
 brethren, but gave great satisfaction to others, particu-
 larly the J——s, who separately return'd him thanks for
 it in a private manner, and said they did not expect
 such a sermon from an *Oxford* pulpit. It was in truth
 a very latitudinarian sermon, except that the word sin-
 cerity was us'd in the orthodox sense. It consisted of
 two parts, the first, concerning the subjects propagating
 his religious sentiments ; the second, concerning the
 magistrates power to prevent them. Under the first he
 observ'd, 1. That we should take care the opinions we
 propagate

propagate be true, 'tis not enough that we sincerely believe them to be so. 2. That they be of sufficient importance to the world ; and here he remark'd that no man's opinions are of importance enough to justify his endeavouring to propagate them, among men that did not seem dispos'd to receive them, if such endeavour were likely to be attended with danger to the propagator. The things which are of greatest importance, those which relate to the good of society, the dictates of natural Religion, are acknowledg'd by all mankind ; and if there be any difference among men, 'tis about matters of smaller import, matters of mere revelation, or perhaps the mere modes of that revelation. He then reckon'd up the inconveniencies to self, family, relations and acquaintance that might attend the propagating of a man's sentiments, as a ballance on the other side. In the latter part of his sermon he said, that as he had prov'd before every subject to have a right to chuse his own Religion, his own manner of worshipping, so this was a right which could by no means be deny'd the magistrate, but tho' the magistrate may make this plea for his professing a different Religion from another, it is monstrous to suppose he should have a right to punish that other, for doing what he himself does. That as to an establishment 'twas needless to dispute

dispute about it; for if there were no direct establishment, yet the Prince's Religion must necessarily have so many advantages above others, that there will always be the same thing in effect. He observ'd too under this head, that sincerity would not justify the magistrate in punishing his subjects for matters of speculations, and concluded all with an encomium on the happiness of our own nation, and the freedom we have for some years enjoy'd under a mild and gracious government. Since I wrote greatest part of this, I have spoke to *W*—— on the subject mention'd in the beginning of this letter, and find he has quitted his former notions in both points. You had had this letter sooner, but that I have been for three days past almost continually taken up in attendance upon *C*——r, who has lately had more than ordinary occasion to think of another world, but appears at last to be more frighted than hurt, I mean as to his being in any danger, his distemper proving to be only a *Tertian* ague, which is a thing that spreads very much in *Oxon* at present. *C*——r having taken the bark, has mis'd one fit, and to day, *i. e.* *Wednesday*, is the second, but I have not seen him as yet to day. We have had a good quantity of snow this morning, which fell in very large flakes. I hear the men hot at work upon stones in the lane under Mr.

S——'s

S——'s window, for our new building. C——'s nurse A—— M——s sympathises with him, and seems to be a good sensible woman enough. He lodges there and I am with them both every day, but not a word of this abroad.

May 29, 1728.

This letter was found in Mr. R—— J——'s escrutore.

LETTER II.

Dear SIR,

WHAT I would say upon the subject of benevolence is only this, that benevolence seems to be in the nature of the thing amiable; that God is the author of all things is allow'd, or at least suppos'd for the present, and consequently, that he is the author of their natures too, because the nature of things (whether by that expression be understood nothing more than their existence, or something resulting from their existence) cannot be without their existence. But if by God's being the author of the nature of things, be meant, that he could make them entirely after what manner he pleas'd, this, I think, is carrying the matter too far. 'Tis allow'd by all men, that God cannot do contradictions: if he would create a triangle, yet he cannot

do it in such a manner, that its three interior angles shall not be equal to two right ones. So if he would make a perceptive creature, he cannot make him in such a manner, as that he shall delight to act against his own self-interest, I mean, from this principle as the motive to his acting — that 'tis against his own self-interest: Hence I conclude not only that man is a self-interested being, but moreover that all other perceptive beings necessarily are so too; even God himself, who if he really be exempt from any care about his own happiness, cannot be so upon any other account than this, that the utmost happiness of which his nature is capable, arises so necessarily from his constitution, (if I may be allow'd so to speak) that it prevents his care. Now when I say benevolence is founded in the nature of things, I mean that it necessarily does arise from the frame of such beings; as no perceptive being can be pleas'd with its own misery, so neither can it with the misery of others. My reason for this assertion is, that there is not in either case any motive to determine the mind, nor can I conceive how such determination can be entirely arbitrary. I know it's generally said, and perhaps generally thought, that the same objects might be present to our senses, as are now, and yet we not receive the same pleasure from them that we now do.

But

But this, however true upon the *Newtonian* scheme, cannot be so upon the *Berkleian*. If a rose smell like a rose, the mind will necessarily be pleas'd with the sensation; and if what to day pleases the palate, to morrow is distastful, 'tis because the thing strictly speaking is not the same. What necessarily makes every thing to be what it is, pleasing or displeasing, is the relation there is in the nature of the thing, betwixt the object, and the mind perceiving; what is the result of this relation, in most cases we know not but by experience: Yet this I think we may be sure of, that certain things are in their nature incapable of being the foundation of pleasure. Of this kind I take malevolence to be. Malevolence does not always, does not necessarily excite pleasure; and what does not so, cannot excite pleasure at all. *Rationes boni & mali sunt æternæ & immutabiles*, say the schools; so I say of pleasure, and for the same reason; for if a thing be not desireable at one time, it cannot be so at another, unless there be some additional circumstances to make it so; and if it be chosen upon the account of some additional circumstances, it is plainly not the thing itself that is chosen, but the additional circumstances. Malice when not disinterested is really no malice at all, tho' perhaps the only malice that has any existence *in rerum naturâ*.

The action, when 'tis done out of a different motive, cannot fairly be attributed to malice; what perhaps may be thought most liable to objection is, that the foundation of pleasure is not arbitrary. But tho' I own God may deprive us of this or that particular pleasure when he pleases, yet I don't think he can make that unpleasant which is pleasant; this seems to me a contradiction: To make a thing unpleasant, which was before pleasant, supposes the unpleasant thing to be the same with the pleasant, or otherwise 'tis not that very thing which was pleasant, which is made unpleasant. Now surely we may say with *Matt. Prior*,

*My Logic then has lost its aim,
If sweet and bitter be the same.*

If it be ask'd, Whence arises this necessity which determines us to be pleas'd with one thing rather than another? I answer by another question, Whence arises the necessity of God's existence? We can often see a necessity, when we cannot see the cause of that necessity. If it be said that God's nature be not like ours, and therefore we cannot argue from the one to the other; I answer, that the formation of the world sufficiently shews, that there is something in God like what we call wisdom

dom in men. I believe it will be readily granted, that the difference in this instance is not in the nature of the thing, but in the degree of it; and if it be admitted, that our moral sense is as necessarily determin'd by the nature of things, as our perceptions of truth, (which I look upon as capable of good proof,) then we may venture to say, that here too the difference is in the same manner. There being therefore no such thing as malevolence in man, but the contrary, we ought to think the same of the Deity likewise. That we are benevolent, therefore God is, you think, wants a connection; I think not if God be suppos'd to be our Creator. Whatever is in the effect pre-existed in the cause, seems to me a true axiom in metaphysics, tho' very inconsistent with the supposition of secondary causes. If it be said, God is not subject to passions as we are; I answer, that passions and whatever else may be urg'd as in man, but not in God, are only so many instances of human weakness, and are entirely deducible from privative causes. Upon the whole it seems impossible to me, that a being who has a power of reflecting to a tolerable degree, should not be affected with the misery of others; things are what they are in their own nature, and the only reason why different people are differently affected by them, is their

different powers of apprehension. Beauty is owing to a complication of ingredients. If I discern only some few of those ingredients, that beauty may be lost to me, which to a superior Being, who discerns the whole, appears in all its glory. There is an amiable in actions, else what determines the divine mind? His affections must be the necessary off-spring of his own nature, else he could have none at all; what appears amiable to him may not appear so to other perceptive beings, because they being inferior in their powers of perceiving, may judge from a partial view of things; but the principle, the affection itself is the same, (in kind I mean, not in degree) tho' the object may appear in a different light. Whatever the inferior has must be in the superior, tho' the superior may have principles of action which the inferior has not. Thus much (a great deal more indeed than I design'd) for benevolence. I hope there is enough of truth in it to make atonements for the faults (if there be any) of the metaphysical part of it, and that it appears from what has been said, that God is not a malevolent, but a benevolent being; tho' whether he may have other principles of action unknown to us, which may hinder the exertion of his benevolence, is a question we can never solve with certainty perhaps. In some things it's probable

his power is limited, and the pleasures of one sense may be inconsistent with those of another; yet I think there's a good deal of room to hope we may enjoy a future state, and almost a certainty that we cannot have prepollent misery in it.—You desire me to put my thoughts upon Christianity into some method, that I may convince those whom it may be proper to have convinced. When the same distemper may be owing to different causes, a physician ought to enquire into the cause before he attempts a cure, otherwise by applying remedies proper only to remove the disorder when owing to a different cause, he will at best but labour in vain. To apply this to the present purpose; Mens errors, in point of Christianity, may be owing either to prejudice or simple ignorance, and he that applies those remedies to a prejudiced man, which are proper only to remove simple ignorance, will hardly prevail if the prejudices be not very slight, which indeed they seldom are. You are, I suppose, satisfy'd, not only that the Christian Religion is false, but moreover, that there is no one of a tolerable understanding but what would have the same sentiments if he could free himself from his prejudices. Our business therefore, in converting one from the error of his ways, and saving a soul from the dismal apprehensions of eternal damnation,

damnation, is, not so much to look for arguments which every unprejudiced man may easily find out, and see the force of himself, but to prepare the mind to receive those arguments without prejudice. And for the doing this I think no general rule can be laid down; different men are prejudiced different ways, and if we would obviate their prejudices we must accommodate ourselves to them. One rule, I think, indeed, ought always to be observ'd, that we should keep the persons we have a design upon, as long as possibly we can, from knowing that we ourselves are of those sentiments to which we would bring them. What further I would say upon the head of conversion I must defer to another opportunity. In the mean time I must desire you to be so cautious of revealing my sentiments of Christianity, as not to discover them to any man whatsoever that is a Christian. I am afraid they are by that means gone already farther than I could wish, considering what differences may not unlikely happen between me and a man of Mr. *H*——'s temper. I shall be drawn into one scrape this year, in voting for a senior Proctor, which officer is to be next year of our house, and will be either *H*——s, or *H*——d; the independent masters may make some opposition for *H*——s, and complain of being hardly dealt

dealt by, he being the senior of the two, but will signify nothing as to the proctorship I believe, tho' *M——s* and *H——t* are come again to college, and have enter'd their names to qualify themselves for a vote, as is suppos'd. I should be glad to know if *F——r* is not acquainted with one *P——y*, a Gentleman Commoner of *Christ-Church*, his mother in *Ber——e* having sneeringly said of one of our house (upon hearing that he was a man of too much morality to do) “ Yes there
 “ are a great many of your moral men they say at
 “ *Trinity.*” My reason for asking is, because I have heard somebody very often mention the name of *P——y*, and think 'tis either *F——r* or *L——t*; and I rather suspect *F——r*, because he is a Christian; and let a Christian be ever so much my friend, I shall always suspect him in this case, because I know he must either act contrary to his religion, or his morality. The story of Mrs. *P——y* (who it seems is no small zealot) I had on *Saturday* last, from a man that I then converted to *Deism*; a man that is indeed too much given to his bottle and hounds already, but a good natur'd sensible man, and one that I could not bear to see labouring under that uneasiness of mind that he often is under, when pleasure and Christianity come in competition. Possibly I may have prevented his drinking too, for he

owns to me that he drinks for fear of thinking. He is a man you have been in company with, and is the son of a famous Non——r; and he says that L——t has often talk'd to him against Christianity, but he was only shock'd at his discourse; which confirms what I was saying before, that the way to convince a prejudic'd man is not to let him know your own sentiments, but draw him in first, before he knows where he is, till 'tis too late to step back. Mr. A——r, formerly a pupil of Mr. S——ll's has presented his *quondam* tutor to the parsonage of —— worth about 500 l. a year, with which he designs to hold —— . For some private reason I suppose H——d preach'd in chapel on *Easter-day*, to prove the sameness of the resurrection body by the *Stamina*; and some time before that at St. Mary's, to shew that God was the proper object of human delight. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.*

May 29, 1728.

This letter was found in Mr. R—— J——'s escrutore.

R E M A R K S

UPON THE

First L E T T E R.

“ **B**AYLE’s dictionary makes more hereticks than
 “ he designs.] A character which ought not
 to be forgotten, especially since by the confession of
 his friend he is insincere. ——— “ I can hardly think
 “ he believ’d his Manichæan system.] An excellent
 guide, who does not appear to have believ’d himself
 what he taught others: Is this the benevolence and
 morality of *Deism*? Yet he notwithstanding recom-
 mends the book, and cares not *to what* he converts
 men if it be but *from* Christianity; if you will but
 renounce your Creed, he will give you free liberty to
 make the devil equal with God.

“ Mr. *W*——’s discourse of the irreconcilableness
 “ of prescience and free-will led him to discover him-
 “ self unawares both as to that subject and Christianity
 “ itself.] ’Tis a pity we do not know the Gentle-
 man’s thoughts upon those points; it would be an ad-
 mirable proof of his reason to deny either the one or
 the other: Or indeed to pretend to explain them.
 However, we find he takes occasion to spread his
 poison from a man’s expressing his apprehension of a
 difficulty, tho’ that difficulty be such as is equally in-
 explicable both in reveal’d and natural religion.

“ Let me dispute as long as I please about the *cui*
 “ *bono*, I find which way nature drives, yet even *re-*
 “ *clamante naturâ*, my reason will keep its hold.] If
 this obscure passage means that there is no *quid bonum*
 in being a Christian, it is not reason, but lusts and
 fear, that is, corrupt nature keeps its hold, *reclamante*
ratione. How blind must he be who can see no good
 in the hopes of an happy eternity? If the sense be,
 there is no end serv’d in converting men to a disbelief
 of a future state, and nature shrinks at annihilation;
 ’tis a dreadful confession of the uncomfortableness of
 infidelity, and of the contradiction between their pre-
 tended

tended reason and the principle of self-preservation implanted in all men by the God of nature.

“ I cannot find Christianity has done so much mischief in the world as you apprehend.] He does not prove it has done any ; but this is a pretty large concession from an adversary in spite of his dear Mr. *Bayle*'s reasons.

“ Priests of all religions are the same.] Excellent justice! to make those who die for the truth as guilty as their murderers. It has been well urged that the promoters and preachers of *Deism* are the priests of it, and therefore as bad as the rest by this rule ; except they will say that *Deism* is no religion at all, and then why do they banter the world by crying up the religion of nature ?

“ More detriment than advantage has been done to the cause of *Deism* by an open profession of it.] 'Tis an untoward sign of the truth of any doctrine that it shuns the light and must be propagated only among friends and unawares ; they may be trusted with the secret who wish well to the cause, that is, are already tainted. How irreconcilable is this to their loud and frequent

frequent pretences, that they want nothing but a fair hearing ! 'Tis not truth but craft they rely upon.

“ Many *Bangorians* I know believe future punishments.] Then several it seems do not believe them. Blessed fruits of their doctrine, which one of their admirers assures us of ! Is *Deism* a religion without penal functions ?

“ When I speak of converting men to *Bangorianism*,
 “ I mean that they should be led into the principle of
 “ interpreting scripture by reason in all cases whatsoever,
 “ and consequently that they should follow the sentiments of *Tillotson*, as to future punishments.] The degrees are natural ; men are first to be taught there is no necessity of a hell ; then to take another step and deny its existence ; and, at last, to throw off all revelation by the help of that grand engine, reason, in interpreting scripture. But where is the common sense of interpreting scripture so as to destroy its authority ? And where is the common honesty of arguing gravely from the bible, and appealing solemnly thereto, when we believe it all a cheat ?

“ 'Tis not scripture does the mischief, but that abominable principle of submitting reason to revelation.] True reason can never clash with revelation any more than one truth with another: Nothing is farther from it than the *Deists* interpretations. If scripture does no mischief, reveal'd religion is none,—for surely scripture proves that, as all who can read must own, if masters of any understanding and candour. And how can it be any rule of faith or manners, except upon supposition of revelation?

“ The overthrow of Christianity I cannot but think impracticable.] This is remarkable in an adversary; why does he therefore attempt to overthrow it? But is it not a strong presumption of its truth, that it was practicable to introduce it, but is impracticable to overturn it?

“ One superstition will probably succeed another, and it may well be doubted whether we of this nation shall be better'd by the change.] Yet these gentlemen labour to gain proselytes, tho' they own among themselves 'tis to no good purpose. Popery and tyrannical priests may be the event. A fair warning not to listen to their insinuations.

Mens

“ Mens passions and inclinations seem to make them
 “ incapable of *Deism*.] Yet fear of hell and desire
 to satisfy their lusts securely lead them into it, as we
 shall see below, when he comes to give an account of
 one of his converts.

“ 'Tis a difficult matter to bring a man into *Deism*
 “ without leading him into *Bangorianism*.] Behold
 the mischief of sapping foundations! How honourably
 are those gentlemen employ'd, who under pretence of
 setting up Christ's kingdom, pave the way to the de-
 nial not of his Godhead only, but even of his very
 Being.

“ There is no likelihood you say that *Bangorianism*
 “ should ever spread, being so inconsistent with Scrip-
 “ ture.] An observable concession from an Infidel;
 denied indeed by this letter-writer, for says he, We
 must put no construction on it absurd to reason. Is it
 no absurdity then to reason to construe texts incon-
 sistently with revelation? To suppose God reveals his
 will to man, and yet leaves him as much at liberty to
 obey or disobey it, as if it were not reveal'd at all?

“ A man

“ A man that believes the doctrine of sincerity will
 “ soon find the due latitude of it in real duties ; nor
 “ will he think himself oblig’d to a strict observance
 “ of ceremonies.] See here the benefit of sincerity, and
 the great consolation of *Deism* ! A man may get loose
 from whatever he does not like under the name of ce-
 remonies. Why should he be so ceremonious as to
 avoid a drinking bout, or scruple an intrigue ? As to
 go to church, or pray at all, or even to pay his debts ?
 What should restrain him from any thing he thinks
 convenient here, who has nothing to hope or to fear
 hereafter ?

“ While he hopes Christianity may be true he does
 “ not care to countenance *Deism*, and say---he doubts.]
 I don’t see why hope on the one side is not as con-
 sistent with impartiality, as fear on the other. How
 often does this poor man in these letters betray his fear
 of hell-fire and a future state of punishments !

“ As to benevolence, &c.] *Deism* itself will hardly
 secure him against divine vengeance, he must wink a
 little harder and commence Atheist. The stronger the
 arguments are for the divine benevolence, the more

probable it is that God has not left mankind without a revelation to grope in the dark after what most nearly concerns them.

“ You argue from fact that God is not benevolent.] Evil in this world is objected against God’s goodness, as well as a hell hereafter. What would these gentlemen have said to a Christian who should deny there is any goodness in the supreme Being? Admirable in truth is the Religion of Nature, if all its professors be like these two; one of whom denies God’s mercy, and the other his justice.

“ If there be this difference between God and man, (*i. e.* this benevolent and that not) “ I am a more glorious being than my Maker.] Instead of idle proof in such a matter, he should have shew’d, if he could, that a future state of misery was inconsistent with God’s mercy; but this he very wisely takes for granted. His whole reasoning on benevolence may with the alteration of a few words conclude irresistibly against himself. Is justice a perfection in man, or is it not? Is God without that perfection? If so, man is the more glorious being.

Mr.

Mr. S——'s sermon, if not misrepresented, did indeed deserve a *Deist's* praise, tho' not the approbation of J——s. "Matters of mere revelation should not be propagated being of smaller import.] This would have kept Christianity out of the world. "No inconveniencies to self, family, relations should be bore.] What were then the old martyrs? Such assertions as these from a pulpit might make the ears of a Christian tingle, nay of an honest heathen too: For which shews most regard to truth, he who will run no hazard for the sake of it, or he who would lose all that is dear besides, rather than not establish it in the world? Let heathens judge if they be honest. Not those who make a mask of Religion, and who would overturn revelation by the help of the Bible: Such mens heathenism I readily grant, but beg to be excus'd as to believing their honesty.

R E M A R K S

UPON THE

Second L E T T E R.

“ **A**S no perceptive being can be pleas’d with its
 “ own misery, so neither can it with the mi-
 “ fery of others.] Thus he is again fencing against a
 future reckoning, which so often frightened him in his
 first letter. Are his arguments so strong as the proofs
 of Christianity? No, they are vain and frivolous. Sup-
 pose God is not delighted with misery as such; yet is
 not justice one of his attributes with which he is well
 pleas’d? May he not take pleasure in vindicating the
 honour of his laws, and manifesting to the whole crea-
 tion his approbation of good, and abhorrence of evil?
 No benevolence forbids this, nay on the contrary it is
 highly beneficent to the public so to do.

“ Malice

“ Malice when not disinterested is really no malice
 “ at all, tho’ perhaps the only malice that has any
 “ existence in *rerum naturâ*.] Can there then be no
 malice at all, unless it be entirely unmix’d? It would
 be well for mankind if he could destroy that quality
 from the earth. However his drift perhaps may be
 agreeable enough to his no-religion; for if he can but
 disarm the Almighty of his thunder (which he at-
 tempted before) and annihilate the Devil now, he may
 be pretty sure to escape hell.

“ We are benevolent, therefore God is; whatever
 “ is in the effect is in the cause.] Once more change
 the word and let who can disprove the consequence.
 We are just, therefore God is so too.

“ Whether God may have other principles of action
 “ unknown to us, which may hinder the exertion of
 “ his benevolence, is a question we can never solve
 “ with certainty perhaps.] Must Christianity be given
 up for a perhaps? This wretched doubt in effect yields
 the whole cause. Perhaps the divine benevolence may
 be hinder’d by some other principle. Perhaps too that
 hindrance may occasion a future punishment. If these
 principles

principles are unknown, ignorance is no security. But whose fault is it that *Deists* will not know God, nor be acquainted with his attributes ?

“ In some things its probable his power is limited.] What perplexity is here ? Every Christian who understands his faith knows God’s power is limited by all his other attributes. He can do nothing unwise, unholy, unmerciful, or unjust, for that would imply a contradiction. His attributes are circumscrib’d and directed by each other ; his wisdom acts in concert with his holiness, and his mercy is at perfect amity with his justice ; of all which the Gospel is so plain a proof, that if it be hid it is hid to them that are lost.

“ I think there is a good deal of room to hope we
 “ may enjoy a future state, and almost a certainty that
 “ we cannot have prepollent misery in it.] Their exalted notions of God’s mercy cannot insure them rewards to come. What a stupid change would that Christian make who should part with his reliance on the divine promises, the word and the oath of God himself, to depend upon a *Deist*’s I think ? What are the *We* who have almost a certainty against prepollent misery ? Surely not those who live under the Gospel and
 2 trample

trample upon it ; who destroy natural Religion by their lewd doctrine of sincerity, and by taking away its penal functions ? If a wise and just Being presides over the world, there is demonstration against them. Happy are they who by accepting God's mercy are safe whatever state they come to !

“ You are, I suppose, satisfied not only that the
 “ Christian Religion is false, but moreover that there
 “ is no one of tolerable understanding but what would
 “ have the same sentiments if he could free himself
 “ from his prejudices.] The people in *Bedlam* may easily say all are mad but themselves. Contemptible ignorance this ! If they do not know that the prejudices of fallen nature are on the side of infidelity and apostasy. Which way pray lay the prejudices when Christianity prevail'd against the whole learning, policy, interest and power of this world, without any education to help it forward ?

“ Our business then in converting one from the errors of his way, and saving a soul from the dismal apprehensions of eternal damnation.] Observe again the main end of *Deism* to reconcile present sinful enjoyments, with the hopes of future impunity. This
 is

is their way of saving a soul, in which there might be some sense if the thing hell could be destroy'd as easily as the fear of it, and if fact depended upon mens apprehension; otherwise 'tis as nonsensical as 'tis impious to proselyte any to *Deism*, whereby they are not a jot safer from hell than before, but only left without the most weighty incitements to virtue and restraints from vice.

“ No general rule can be laid down,—one rule
 “ indeed I think ought to be always observ'd.] Where is the difference between a general rule and a rule that ought always to be observ'd? Whatever the moderns, *Locke* and *le Clerc* may do, the musty schoolmen, subtle as they are, will furnish us with no distinction. The Mahometans indeed may help us out at a dead lift, who have a Catholicon fully equal to the occasions of the most self-contradicting unbeliever. *Mahomet*, the great enemy of the Trinity and planter of *Deism* in the *East*, used frequently to be guilty of contradictions in his Alcoran; now when two passages stand staring each other in the face never to be reconciled, his followers insist upon it, that the latter of the two does not contradict the former, but only repeals it. To return and be serious, I take no notice

tice of any other instance of mere folly, because I would not divert the reader from the merits of the cause; on which account too I have purposely avoided animadversions upon the secret history in these letters, lest I should fall into reflections that might seem personal.

“ We should keep the persons we have a design upon, “ as long as possibly we can, from knowing that we “ ourselves are of those sentiments to which we would “ bring them.] This is a good caution to simple Christians to beware of the vile hypocrisy of these pretenders to morality. This golden rule of theirs it seems ought always to be observ’d, tho’ it ought to be enlarged a little, and they should carry their craft a little further, and forbid their proselytes the use of knives and halts, lest by laying violent hands upon themselves they should discover the secrets of *Deism*.

“ Let a Christian be ever so much my friend I shall “ always suspect him in this case, because I know he “ must either act contrary to his religion or morality.] We see the *Deists* themselves despise a Christian who professes any friendship for them, because they think

if he be sincere to them he must be false to his own religion ; a fair warning not to desire their familiarity, and not to credit their applauses. If in power they would doubtless persecute Christians, because they would always suspect them. What cruelties might we not then reasonably expect from wretches who even now pour out the most scurrilous revilings upon all authority, civil and ecclesiastical ; with amazing impudence and blasphemy against the calmest of their adversaries, against the Fathers of the Church ! I wish they had paid some tolerable regard to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls ! But I suppose Deists are as much above good manners and decency as ever any enthusiastic dreamer was above ordinances.

“ I converted to *Deism* a man that is indeed too much given to his bottle and hounds,—I could not bear to see him labouring under the uneasiness of mind that he is often under when pleasure and Christianity came in competition.] A worthy convert, a man of pleasure, a drunkard and a fox-hunter, who fled to his bottle as an opiate for his guilty conscience. We find reason and argument have no hand in converting a man to *Deism* ; present pleasure and future impunity are the motives which stand in stead of them.

Who would not turn *Deist* to be indulged in such pleasure as he must not enjoy if he remain a Christian? Is this your reasonableness ye men of demonstration? Is this your morality ye moral men?

Why do the heathen so furiously rage together ; and why do the people imagine a vain thing?

If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

Fear them not therefore, for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known.

F I N I S.



Who would not turn Day to be indulged in such pleasures as he must not enjoy if he were a Christian? Is your reasonings ye must be moral men? Is your morality ye moral men?

Why do the heathen so fully enjoy a religion; and why do the people imagine a false one?

Why does called the wisdom of the heathen? Is it not the wisdom of the heathen? Is it not the wisdom of the heathen?

What then is the wisdom of the heathen? Is it not the wisdom of the heathen? Is it not the wisdom of the heathen?

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